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Megan Foster
Providence College

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The Effects of Permanency on Youth in Foster Care:

The Successes They Achieve After Exiting the System

Megan Foster

Providence College

Abstract

This study reported on the connection between the permanency a youth in the foster care system experienced and the success they achieved as they transitioned out of the system. Housing, education, and employment were factors addressed. Data was gathered through four interviews with youth who had recently transitioned out of the foster care system and 435 surveys were collected in the months of April and October 2010. Results revealed that youth often use state programs to supplement their needs during the treatment process. Youth that attained success created and maintained relationships with workers who become adult supporters for them. Implications of this research can address policy and practice, specifically in the areas of more support from state programs in the areas of employment and education.

The Effects of Permanency on Youth in Foster Care:
The Successes They Achieve After Exiting the System

Some of the traditional hallmarks of a successful life are to obtain a good education, to find a stable job, and to live in safe and affordable housing. Young adults coming out of foster care have to face more obstacles than those who grow up in the homes of their family to achieve these kinds of successes. People that do not become a part of the foster care system grow up with a series of supports that foster youth don't have. Community supports, family supports, even neighbors and teachers that they grow up with and form relationships with, are resources that foster youth lack. When foster youth "age out of the system", meaning when foster youth are old enough to leave the care of the state, these supports can be used for advice and social connections. Foster youth start in a place where even finishing high school might be a challenge. The struggle is more difficult, particularly in Rhode Island, ever since the policy change stating that young adults 18 and older cannot be provided for in the foster care system. Foster children often grow up without the loving support of parents, and at age 18 are forced to live on their own, and expected to find housing and employment. With those responsibilities taking precedence in their lives, it is hard for them to stay in school and many do not finish high school or receive their GED (Andrade, Choice, Downes, Schaldach, 2001, p. 1). Foster children grow up in very different situations. Regardless, whether they are in foster care for only a month before being placed back with their biological parents, or they are moved from group home to group home for seven years of their lives, their lives are disrupted and their trust in adults is damaged. Developing good relationships with reliable adults is important for a child to progress in their life in a positive way. Foster youth can form relationships with people in their environment to create a family-like support system.

There are many programs that support adolescents as they age out of foster care, such as the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF), Rhode Island Foster Parents Association (RIFPA), and the Jim Casey Youth Foundation. These programs are not a replacement for a stable adult in the foster child's life that they can trust. The state programs provide assistance in terms of getting money for certain assets, like rent and education, but at certain times youth need support to reach out and take advantage of the programs made for them. There are studies that show that staying in a family-based foster care situation benefits the child more than group homes or the instability of moving from family member to family member (Bussiere, 2006, p. 26). The best thing that can be achieved for foster children is permanency. Permanency is when a foster child is placed with either a relative or a foster home that may lead to adoption, or reunification with their birth parents as soon as possible. Permanency is traditionally thought of as when a foster child is placed with either a relative or foster home that may lead to adoption, or reunification with their birth parents as soon as possible. The theory is that permanency for a child could be any adult in their life that is consistently there for them, even if they are not a legal guardian. There are often circumstances where someone cares for the child that has entered the system, but they are in a place to give them a home. If it isn't possible to have a stable home life, then it is believed that the next best thing is an adult that is consistently a part of the child's life. This adult may be someone the child could use as a mentor or someone they can stay in touch with consistently. It is believed that having an adult that can be a good role model and teach the foster child certain life lessons that are usually learned from the immediate family, then that child has a better chance of going on to achieve future success. The permanency they achieve when an adult cares for them and provides support regularly gives them the life skills needed to transition out of foster care successfully.

A child's chance at finishing high school and moving on to college seems to improve when they have a responsible adult to help them navigate the system. Instability at home logically leads to instability at school. Without even taking into account the trauma that foster children face that makes attending school difficult, foster children often have to switch schools leading to an inconsistent education. The loss of school records during transfer is a fairly common occurrence, especially when an adult with the child's welfare in mind is not there to take responsibility. Continuing education can be a problem too overwhelming for a vulnerable foster child to take care of. Without receiving a proper education, it becomes more and more difficult to find steady and well-paying employment, and without money it is impossible to then find good housing.

An agency in Rhode Island collects data on at least 80% of the youth within their transitional program, which is for youth in foster care between the ages of 14 and 24. This program is for youth that have at one point been in foster care after their 14th birthday, and is a tool to help them become more fiscally responsible. The program consists of several financial literacy classes. Then they are required to save within a specific type of savings account, where they will be matched 1:1 dollars towards a permanent asset of their choice, such as educational fees, a vehicle, or for housing. There are several requirements to be a part of the program, such as consistently saving and keeping in contact with your caseworker. These require youth to be responsible to succeed in the program. The youth are given a survey to take twice a year, asking a myriad of questions regarding the types of foster care they have been in and their current status in school, employment, healthcare, etc. The data identifies the type of foster care the youth receive, whether they lived in group homes and moved a lot or they managed to get into kinship care and were quickly adopted. Some of the questions include where the youth has ended up

after they left care, and about their support systems. This data can reveal how prepared youth are to transition out of foster care. For this study, the quality of permanency will be addressed to learn if having supports affects these three variables: educational achievements, employment stability, and housing stability after the youth leave care. By analyzing the different data sets, a profile can be developed to show which foster youth are most likely to be at risk of incarceration or on federal/state welfare.

The database and resulting profile could be used to identify children earlier for prevention purposes. If social workers can intervene at the right stages then there is an opportunity to help foster children achieve more with their lives. This study of the data collected about foster youth can lead to the creation and implementation of programs that better track the lives of youth in foster care. This can assist social workers to follow up on areas where a foster child needs help and provide them an increased chance at permanency. Permanency is rarely the plan when it is realized that the child can no longer go back to their birth parents. Too many have a plan of just aging out of the system, often because they are in their older teens and are seen as not desirable for adoption. "Older teens, from ages 16-18, are those most likely to be living in group homes" (Barth et al, 2005, pg. 1). Treating youth in this way, letting them "slip through the cracks", is damaging for their futures and their self-esteems. In these instances, where children are moving around a lot, it is hard for them to keep in touch with any one adult that they trust. The fact that they move in with new people and essentially have to recreate their lives after every move is difficult enough without losing the person (or people) in their lives that they can always turn to with their problems and for advice. Social workers should not let "aging out of the system" ever be a standing plan. This is why the development of an intervention program should be implemented, so that every child has an equal chance at finding a stable

home. Once the data from this study is analyzed, and if the conclusion has a significant basis, social workers may be able to use the data in a productive way. With an established model of how different degrees of permanency correlate to different degrees of success, at least according to this small sample, those at the most risk can be identified and targeted for intervention. An intervention can prevent a youth from failing at achieving certain success standards which might otherwise be seen as an inevitable occurrence, due to their background. The data can be used to provide a meaningful service to youth that are faced with struggles that can be addressed by a dependable adult.

In order to study the effects of permanency, analysis will be conducted from gathered information from a small Rhode Island agency dealing with foster parents and youth. The information will be data collected from foster youth in regards to the type of permanency they have experienced, and comparisons can be made from their experiences in holding a job, progressing in education, and stability of their housing situation. The analysis of the data can potentially reveal if there is a correlation between different degrees of permanency and their successful transition out of foster care. Permanency is a popular topic, but more can be learned regarding targeting those youth most at risk because of their difficulties finding permanency, and how helping professionals can intervene to make lives easier for youth in foster care.

Literature Review

Permanency for youth in foster care has been widely studied. “While the youth are in foster care, the state has the responsibility of parenting them. This responsibility includes providing them with an education and preparing them for independent living. Unfortunately, the country as a whole has failed to live up to its responsibility to foster youth” (Henig, 20010 pg. 16). Too many youth get into the system and are left to languish without achieving permanency.

Several studies have tried to judge the effects of the different types of care on youth and how they develop. It is widely known that permanency is better for the children than moving from place to place, but when permanency is hard to find, what can be done? The primary goal for foster youth is reunification with the biological family. When this is not possible, many agencies then look to have the youth adopted by a relative or caring foster home. Many older youth that cannot be reunified with biological parents dwell in the foster care system until they age out. It is much harder to get older youth adopted. Sometimes, even if there is a person willing to adopt a foster youth in state care, it makes more sense for them to stay in the system, because they receive more monetary support from the government for things like school and healthcare. For this reason, "permanency" will be used as a synonym for adoption/reunification with birth parents within this study. The definition of permanency in this study includes all youth that have an adult in their life whom they trust and will support them with all of their needs. This can be anyone in their social systems that they have established a relationship with.

Older youth need just as much support as younger children in foster care. They may be better able to take care of themselves, but 18 is still a very early age to have to live on your own, especially without guidance in the form of a trustworthy adult. Our focus is on older youth, because their experience in the system and their successful transition out of care is what is being studied. According to Bussiere, "some key concepts [for maintaining permanency] are involvement of young people in their own permanency planning, early and ongoing identification of individuals who are important to and care about the youth, inclusion of these individuals in the youth's permanency planning, and provision of appropriate support before and after the permanent placement" (2010, pg. 3-4). These steps are for easing an older youth's transition out of foster care and include the important points of listening to what the youth needs

are, and identifying people that can be the point of permanency early on. These steps are important no matter the kind of placement the youth is in.

Foster youth display an amazing amount of resiliency through the issues they face, and as such, should be given respect. Adults that respect a youth's ability to live through the hardships that many of them face, will give youth the right to decide how they will gain permanency. Effective care-givers to foster youth recognize resiliency as the strength that it is, and "in long-term foster families, effective carers have been found to be working on building these resilience characteristics during the middle childhood years" (Beek & Schofield, 2009, pg. 2). Efforts at permanency are directly related to what kind of care the youth has been through.

Types of foster care

There are different types of foster care that provide different levels of support for youth in the state system. Kinship care includes being placed in the care of a legal relative. This is usually the easiest for youth, to transition to living with someone they know and have probably grown up with. These placements have the advantage of lasting longer than the other types of foster care placements (Farmer, 2009). They also are the best chance at permanency, because there is the bond of family between them. Though this situation is best for youth, it is hardest on the family member that takes them in, as it causes added stress and more of a feeling of guilt if they are unable to care for the youth any longer (Koh, 2008).

A foster family is a person or couple that becomes your legal guardian for as long as the youth needs to be in care. They usually only take in one to five children at a time, though sometimes more, and the foster child becomes a part of the family. One must be approved by a government agency to become a foster parent, but that doesn't always guarantee that the family

will provide adequately for the child. Generally though, this is more personalized care that provides a good support if the youth can make a connection with their foster parent(s).

Group care includes group homes, shelters, or institutions where there are a lot of youth in one facility and there is staff to take care of them. This type of care is known for its history of abuse and neglect that has been reported to happen in certain facilities, but it provides a structured environment that some youth need. Group homes are meant to last on a temporary basis and provide the least amount of personal support due to the amount of kids versus staff, though this kind of care has the most vulnerable group (McCrae et al , 2010, pg. 37). This kind of housing is usually categorized for youth by the type of issues they have (behavioral, developmental, mental health) or by age and gender. Youth often move from group home to group home, because there are simply not enough foster families available. Because group care is mainly a temporary placement, the youth often needs to move if they are no longer in need of the specialized services the placement provides.

Mentoring as a support for foster youth transitioning out of care

All of the previously discussed placements only provide support until the youth ages out of the system at 18, per Rhode Island law. Some youth maintain certain supports from agencies for several more years depending on the situation. Their placements when they are in care only affects how well they enter society on their own when they form meaningful relationships. This is obviously easier in kinship care and foster families than in group care, but still it does not mean that they will necessarily bond well with their guardians.

At an agency in Rhode Island that serves foster parents, there is a program that provides mentoring for youth in foster care. This mentor often becomes someone that the youth can go to in times of need and will stay in their lives even if the youth were to move from home to home.

Mentoring programs have grown a lot in recent years (Collins, Smashnaya, Spencer, Ward, 2010). Mentors provide a kind of permanency that many youth depend on, especially when aging out of care. Foster youth statistics maintain that they achieve record low incomes and high incarceration rates after they leave the system. This reason alone shows how foster youth need and deserve support even after they turn 18. A mentor can be that person they can turn to when they need a job or need advice about their education, or are about to be evicted from their homes. There are usually programs that they can take advantage of, for monetary support to help make the transition out of care less of a difficulty, but even obtaining these services requires help.

Problems in the foster care system

By keeping foster youth in care, the state needs to devote more money to the foster care system. This is why some states, like Rhode Island, reduced their foster care age to 18 from 21, to combat rising foster care costs. This is not so effective. The majority of federal money that is allotted for foster youth goes towards keeping youth in foster homes, instead of towards transitional programs and prevention (The Pew Commission, pg. 13). This turns the problem of youth in foster care into a cycle, where the problem never ends, and more children are left to languish in foster care, building up social worker's caseloads, stopping their clients from attaining permanency again, because their worker doesn't have enough time to work with them. Youth can reach a certain amount of permanency through having a mentor that they can rely on for support, but mentoring programs need funding to function. If youth have a trained mentor within the community, they may develop a relationship with that person, then they will be more likely to take in that youth when they are in need of a permanent placement, which costs less money to the state.

The court system determines when parental rights are permitted or terminated and is where children are officially adopted. The court system does a lot of work for the child welfare system, but in several ways, it fails. They do not read the cases thoroughly to determine trends between youth in foster care and what causes delays in court proceedings or who are most at-risk of ending up in care for a long time (The Pew Commission, pg. 14). Courts do not spend a lot of time with each case, by necessity, and aren't able to work with child welfare agencies to provide the best solution. The youth's preferences are often not considered when the decision is being made either, making the placement even less applicable.

School systems are ultimately responsible for educating all children, including foster youth who need more help in school due to problems in their personal lives that make completing school more difficult. Navigating the foster care system as a young person is difficult enough. Navigating the school system, where foster youth are expected to complete the work like every other child, without the supports that those not in foster care have, is even harder (Andrade, Choice, Downes, & Schaldach, 2001). Without adequate support in school, foster youth do not receive the education that they are entitled to.

Programs that help youth age out of care

When foster youth age out of care, they are able to receive several different types of services. Housing, stable employment, and continuing education are necessary components to living self-sufficiently. Housing, which many youth have to find right as they turn 18, can be supported through an Independent Living Program that has staff available until the youth turns 21. This is not a great solution, because it is so temporary, but it at least allows the youth to finish high school and not worry about living on their own for a couple of years. "Under the Family Unification Program (FUP), local housing authorities provide housing vouchers to youth

aging out…these grants are not enough to pay ongoing rent, but they can help youth with ancillary costs as they transition from foster care" (Margolin, 2009, pg. 1). Education is a struggle, because with the cut-off age so young, many people have trouble even finishing high school. It is generally acknowledged, that higher education is associated with leading a more successful life.

There are numerous scholarships available for children that have been in care (Margolin, 2009), but it is difficult to navigate the educational system without an adult to even talk to about it. On top of that, going to college is not a priority if you have only yourself to depend on to pay for rent. With the necessities of rent and food, making a job a priority, it is even harder on people so young, and without support, to continue to get their education. Even the highest achievers would find this situation difficult, but they all know how important getting an education is. For youth to achieve any type of self-sufficiency as they transition out of care, they need to find employment (Henig, 2009). Each state is required to have programs that help employ youth and help teach necessary job skills (Margolin, 2009). Many agencies help out by employing youth that they serve, including the foster parents agency. This agency pays a local youth leadership board for the work that they do advocating for youth in foster care. Several of them are also employed to do temporary jobs or other agency work. There are also usually apprenticeship programs that youth can take advantage of while also obtaining a GED or higher education (Margolin, 2009). There are different programs in each state to help with the issues of housing, education, and employment that many foster youth have in record numbers, but they are rarely as helpful as an adult that cares for the well-being of a youth. "Obtaining beneficial employment—which is receiving a living wage, health benefits, and an opportunity for advancement—can have a huge impact on their life after care, as it allows them to pay rent, and

become self-sufficient" (Henig, 2009, pg. 572). General programs are helpful to foster youth and provide needed opportunities. What a youth needs the most is someone to talk about their problems, talk to them about the best way to conduct a job interview, or console and support them if they face a disappointment.

When one considers the amount of foster youth in Rhode Island compared to the number of responsible adults, there should be no reason that there are youth going through life without any kind of adult that they feel that they can trust. Permanency must be achieved for all foster youth so that they feel cared for and safe regardless of the pain they have suffered. Foster youth, lacking the resources of those growing up in biological family households, need these kinds of family-like resources to succeed. Even among youth who use the resources given to them by the government, there is an expected divide between those that have adults in their lives that they can trust and whether they have achieved the successes of a stable job, stable housing, and continuing education. "Beyond independent living programs and transitional services, young people leaving foster care need a permanent connection to at least one caring adult" (Bussiere 2009, pg. 570).

Every foster youth member in this study will be participating in at least one transitioning program that is to provide services to those aging out of foster care. This means that they have a strictly monetary support and may be provided with support from the workers of the program they are participating in. If the youth identify that a caseworker within the program is someone they can trust, then this is a level of permanency that shows they have someone consistent in their life to help support their transition out of care. In the data that is being used within this study, youth can identify any individual inside or outside of the biological family that has/will be a support for them throughout their transition out of foster care. The degree of permanency

identified will be measured against how successful the youth are in maintaining employment, housing, and education.

This study intends to support the importance of having a steady person in the life of a youth in foster care is. By looking at anonymous data about youth in the foster care system from a small Rhode Island agency, as well as interviewing a small sample of youth that have been through the foster care system, we can gain insight into the struggle youth have while in the system, specifically in the areas of housing, employment, and education. From this data, we can extricate how those with a stronger sense of permanency in their lives compare in amount of success to those who had little to know sense of permanency growing up in the foster care system.

Methodology

This is an exploratory, descriptive study using data from a small Rhode Island agency to determine whether there is a connection between permanency in the lives of foster youth and their future successes.

Sample

The sample for this study was taken from a population consisting of those that are enrolled in a money savings program at a small Rhode Island agency intended to help youth in the foster care system. The quantitative data was from a pool of data which came from surveys that all youth enrolled in the money savings program are required to take twice a year. The data for this study will be from all the surveys that the agency acquired in April and October of 2010, totaling 455 surveys.

Five interviews took place with youth over 18, who are in the process of transitioning out of care or have already transitioned. The importance of interviewing youth over 18 was to gain

meaningful data about the knowledge of the transition process from those who have experienced the struggle involved, with or without someone in their life to depend on. The information found when youth share their experiences can provide understanding of how permanency affected the successes of youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

Data gathering

To obtain the quantitative data, there existed data gathered twice yearly that was made quantifiable using a rubric system. The data was provided to the researcher on a disc, already in SPSS format. By limiting the data to information collected in April and October of 2010, as well as limiting it to the questions chosen that provided information about the three areas studied (housing, employment, and education), a picture can be formed about the successes foster youth achieved as they transitioned out of the foster care system. The survey used by the small Rhode Island agency to collect this data was called the Opportunity Passport Participant Survey (OPPS) and was available through a national foundation that funds programs to help youth in the foster care system (See Appendix A). The data was statistically significant, as the program boasted about 250 participants, and at least 80% of the participants took the survey each time. The foster youth self-reported their degrees of success in these areas with their answers to questions. For example, question # 12: Are you currently in school? What type of school are you enrolled in? Are you in school full-time or part-time? These questions were able to demonstrate whether the youth was able to finish school, or stay in school, when transitioning out of care. The data provided statistical evidence on how well foster youth were able to achieve success as they transitioned out of the foster care system.

To identify youth to interview for the qualitative data, a convenience sample was utilized for the study. As youth came into the agency for scheduled appointments, the researcher

requested their participation in the study. The researcher enlisted the assistance of colleagues to identify participants whom have gone through the program and were over 18 years old. Before the interview, each of the youth were asked to sign a consent form stating they understood the interview process and its anonymous nature (See Appendix B). The interviews were recorded and transcribed, all without stating names or identifying factors to keep the youth's anonymity. The interviews were informal conversations starting from the original survey questions and evolved into a dialogue about the motivations behind their choices and the reasons for their struggle (for example interview questions and consent form, see Appendix C and D). The interviews were used to identify trends between different youths' experiences.

Data Analysis

By studying the quantitative data on the SPSS computer program, it was determined statistically how well youth who were in foster care as well as a part of the money-savings program were able to achieve success in the three areas studied. The SPSS program was used to create charts on the sample group's data as well as formulate graphs that show any trends in the data entered into the program. These clear representations of the data are utilized as evidence of success and failure of the sample population.

The quantitative data was then studied to reveal trends between youths' experiences with permanency and their successful transition out of the system. When the transcribed interviews of the youth that participated in the study were evaluated, it was possible to isolate where adult supports were most needed. The qualitative data was then used to explain why these trends might occur and to identify common problems with the current system that would lead to a failure to achieve successes.

Applying this knowledge to the child welfare field can make the actions of helping professionals that work with this population more able to do meaningful work with their clients once they have an understanding of who is at most risk.

Findings

The four youth interviewed had gone through a set of programs that help youth transition out of the foster care program, and are between the ages of 20 and 24. These youth were in the process of transitioning out of the system and had participated in the transitional programs for several years. They were all females who had built relationships with the adults that work in the small Rhode Island agency and through these relationships had obtained small jobs within the agency when the youth were in need of employment. The interviews were, on average, thirty-five minutes long and were conversations about their experiences transitioning out of the foster care system. Each individual had to age out of the system and find housing and employment on their own, without the support of a biological, adoptive, or foster family. It was found that while these youth did not have familial supports, they were able to develop relationships with adults in the transitioning programs that gave them sound advice and helped them transition successfully.

Housing

The youth interviewed all transitioned out of the foster care system and needed to find housing at 18. They all had help transitioning into housing on their own through public service programs. The youth aged 20-21 were able to utilize a Rhode Island program that gives the youth a check, up to $600 a month that they used for living expenses. The older youth interviewed (aged 23-24) used a similar program that was an independent living program. All agreed that the workers at these programs were important in helping them find housing. One youth stated, “Once, [a worker] went with me to go look at an apartment, but it wasn’t very nice.

[The worker] was awesome, she helped me. For the most part, I did it myself after that." Workers help the youth by taking them to visit their first apartment and teach them a little about what they should be looking for.

In analyzing the April and October surveys it was found that the participants in the money-match program live in a variety of places, as seen in Table 1. We can see though, that a majority live independently by self or with a roommate.

Table 1: Living Arrangements for Youth

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	foster care	76	16.7	17.6	17.6
	group home	46	10.1	10.6	28.2
	relative	42	9.2	9.7	37.9
	Independent by self or w/roommate	150	33.0	34.6	72.5
	shelter	4	.9	.9	73.4
	birth parents	24	5.3	5.5	79.0
	independent living housing	64	14.1	14.8	93.8
	school dorm	15	3.3	3.5	97.2
	adoptive family	10	2.2	2.3	99.5
	homeless	2	.4	.5	100.0
	Total	433	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	22	4.8		
Total		455	100.0		

Table 1 shows that a majority were able to find housing, the most common, at 34.6%, was living independently by themselves or with a roommate. Second to that was 17.6% of the population lived in foster homes, this being the portion of the sample that have not yet

transitioned out of the foster care system. Third, 14.8%, lived in independent living housing, which is housing that youth are able to move into at 16 at the earliest, and means that they need to provide for themselves, but at a lower rent cost in a situation that is partially supervised by staff. Table 1 illustrates that a high portion of youth have to find housing as adults at 18, and the interviews supported that this is possible within the housing transitional program with the help of supportive staff that empowered youth.

Employment

Each of the youth interviewed had obtained jobs at the small Rhode Island agency through their relationships with the others at the agency. "It all started here (at the small Rhode Island agency) when I was 16." Many of the youth that go through the programs for foster youth form relationships with their teachers, caseworkers, and program directors. One youth's experience with finding work at the agency was made through the relationships she had developed with the adult workers, "K had let me know that they needed help with fundraising, so I started assisting the development director. Then there was another job as a research assistant, so I interviewed for that and got it." Through these relationships youth are able to talk to adults about their issues finding work. Through these conversations, adults can recommend them for jobs that they know of within the agency, or sometimes they are able to create jobs for a youth in real need. "When I got laid off, I needed a job. [The director] gave me a job here. I used to cook for them. I built a relationship with these ladies here. They gave me an opportunity here because they needed someone."

Starting to work at a young age to support themselves, foster youth understand the value of a dollar and appreciate even having a job. "I've worked since I was old enough to work for money" and "I've always supported myself financially, I love money." The collected data

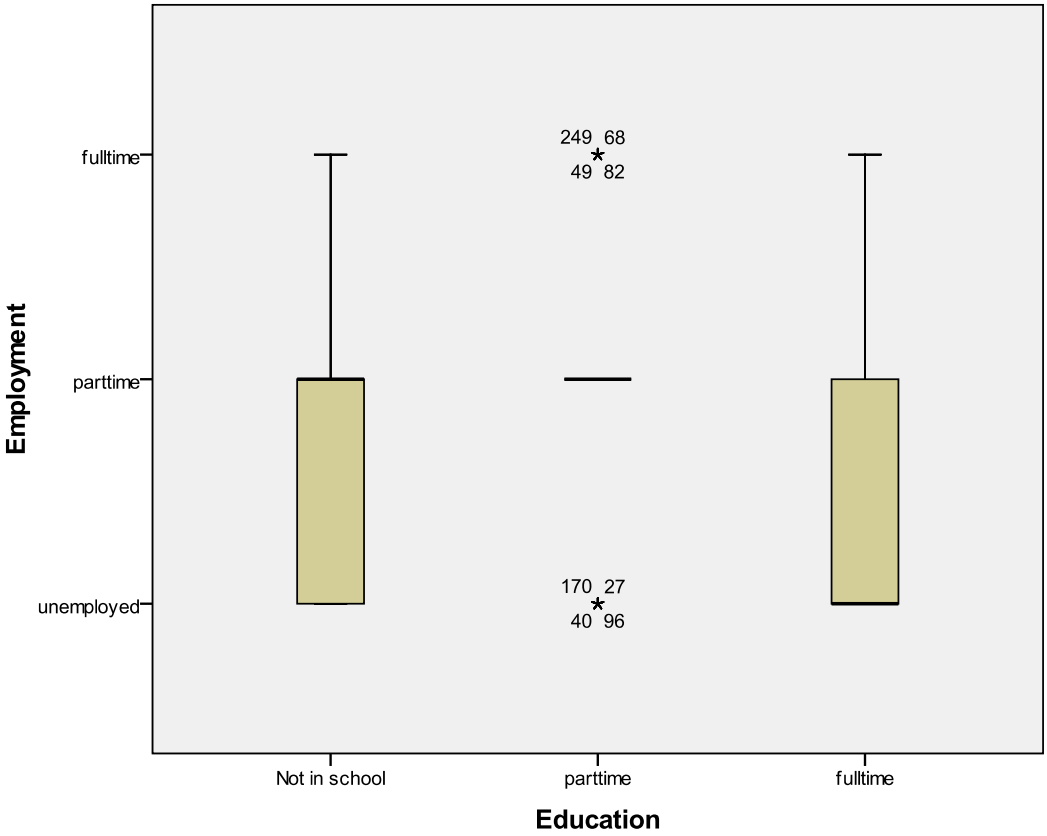
shown in Table 2 indicates that only a small percentage of youth work full time (11.9%), and a majority are unemployed (38.9%). This can be explained by the fact that some are in school full time instead of having a job. Many of the youth work part-time along with going to school either full time or part time.

Table 2: Employment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	177	38.9	45.7	45.7
	Parttime	164	36.0	42.4	88.1
	Fulltime	46	10.1	11.9	100.0
	Total	387	85.1	100.0	
Missing	System	68	14.9		
Total		455	100.0		

In Figure 1, it is evidenced that those in school full time are most often unemployed. Those that do not go to school most often work part time. This shows that youth are having trouble finding and keeping jobs. Two youth explained the trouble they have had with keeping employment, “I work part time, no more than 20 hours a week. But I’m a full time student going for social work.” “I just work part time. Because I just lost my job after I had surgery. I broke my wrist and had to have a screw put in here. I was out of work for a month and then they had to let me go.”

Figure 1: Employment by



Education

Education

Getting into college or any other form of higher education is especially difficult for youth in foster care. Youth in the foster care system often have trouble locating and gathering all their school records from their time moving to different foster care placements. They also have many other important issues to endure when their peers are applying to higher education. This is also the time when they are transitioning out of care and their most immediate concerns would be to find housing and a job to support themselves. Youth run into other issues as well that block them from attending college, “I had trouble filling out the FAFSA, I had to pay out of pocket almost a year later. And when I wanted to go to college, I was still 17. My social worker never faxed over my release, because I wasn’t 18 yet and couldn’t do it on my own.” Foster youth can

be as strong and as independent and as smart as they want, but they need an adult that they trust to help them write the application essays, talk to about schools and career options, co-sign for education loans… the list is long. The youth I interviewed either went to school on full-scholarship or started out at a community college. There are issues for those in foster care while they are in college as well. "I don't like when a teacher automatically assumes you have a computer and puts everything online." College students are expected to have a lot of things that some of them may not be able to afford. Schools don't accommodate for youth that don't have families to go home to over break. One had started a group on campus for youth that were in foster care. "We held a meeting and there were probably five or six kids there that went to URI and were in state child welfare. We went over our book scholarship… we all talked about how we don't have places to stay, so we solved that issue."

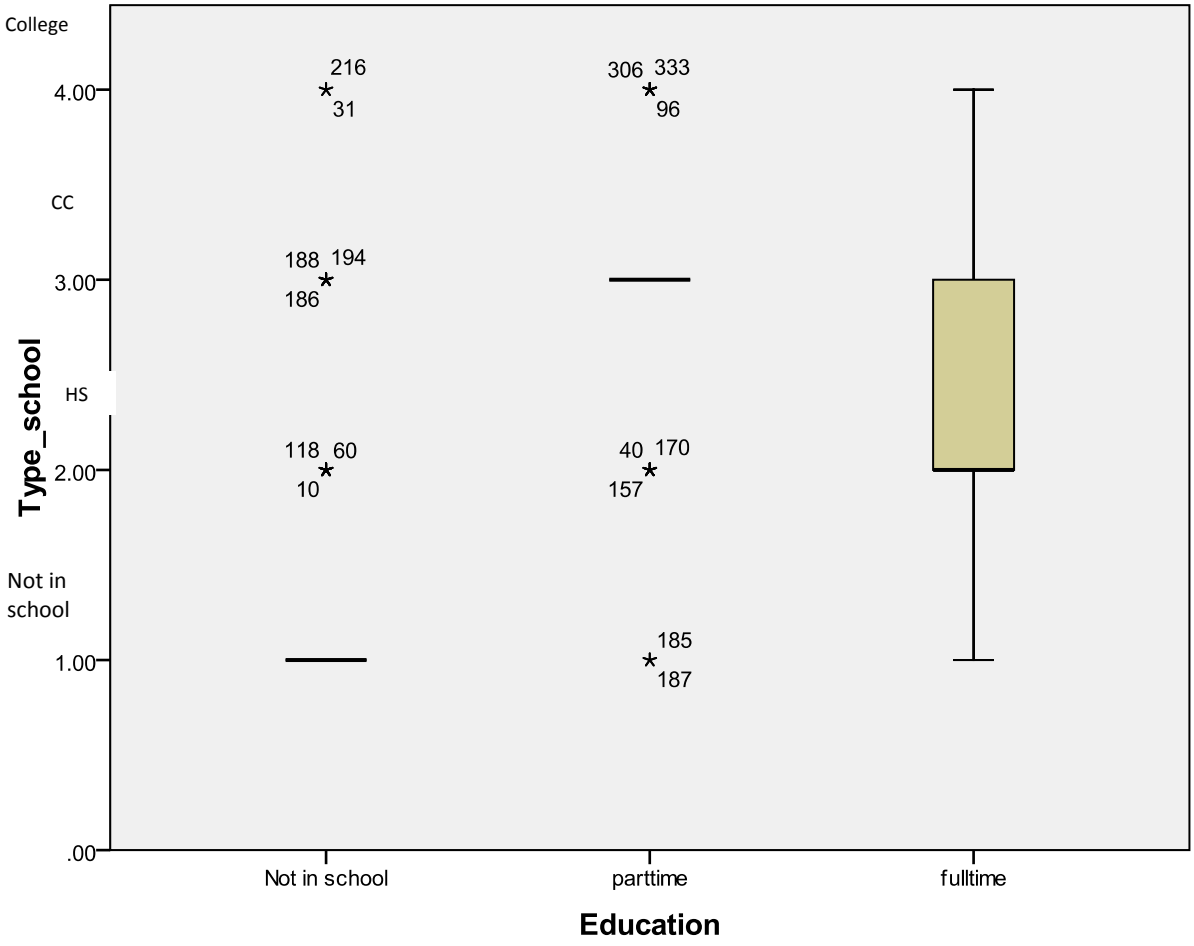
A majority (65.1%) of youth in this program are enrolled in school full time, regardless of the other pressing issues they face. Table 3 illustrates how over half of youth are in school full-time, but this includes the youth still in high school that are required to be in school full-time. Almost a quarter (24.1%) of youth transitioning out of the foster care system are not in school at all. This reflects the fact that education may not be the highest priority for youth at this stage in their life.

Table 3: Percentage of Youth in School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Valid	Not in school	109	24.0	24.1	24.1
	parttime	47	10.3	10.4	34.5
	fulltime	296	65.1	65.5	100.0
	Total	452	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.7		
Total		455	100.0		

There are a variety of school options, including high school, community college, vocational school, and college. According to Figure 2, most youth are in school full time and are in high school, though many are in schooling higher than that. Those youth that go to school part-time are most likely in community college.

Figure 2: Type of School Attending by Type of Student



Youth that successfully transition out of the foster care system without established adult supports find their adult supports within the transitional programs. The interviewed youth identified the transitional programs and the workers providing them services as the main reason that they were able to achieve success in the areas studied. The adult support helped empower them to work hard to achieve what they needed to in order to live satisfactorily.

Summary and Conclusions

At the outset of this study, the intention was to find whether permanency had an impact on the successes youth achieve as they transition out of foster care. The process addressed several roadblocks to success for youth transitioning out of the foster care system, as well as what is most helpful to these youth. Youth see adult supporters as helpful to attaining success in the areas of housing, employment, and education, and they are able to find their adult supports in anyone that can help them succeed. Permanency in the form of an adult supporter that fills a parental role does not appear to be very important to attaining success. Youth without people to fill a parental role found their adult supports in the agencies that they come into contact with most often and other people in their lives. When youth find trustworthy people within their transitional programs, they take the support these workers provide and come to build relationships with those that they work well with. As youth build relationships with workers, they come to trust certain agencies and programs and go to them for help with different kinds of problems.

The quality of the transitional program that helps youth find and pay for housing was noted particularly in this study, since it helps so many of the youth that need to transition into housing. Youth remember the advice they received that helped them when they ran into trouble, "My contract was expiring, so N suggested I downsize a couple months before my contract ended." The workers gave sound advice as adults who understand how to find housing for a person on a limited budget. This is advice other children may go to an adult supporter or parent for. The youth found that they could trust the workers of the program for living advice. Though the workers are trustworthy, they work best with youth who figure things out for themselves. A

worker will go out with the youth for the first time they look at an apartment, maybe a few more, but the youth needs to find the apartment on their own and follow-up on their own volition. "I was good about my *own* housing," explained one youth.

It was clear from the beginning that those youth that were motivated to help themselves were the youth that were able to achieve success with the help of the transitional programs. It was said by several youth that transitioning out of the foster care system is not terribly difficult if you do what needs to be done at the correct times. The existing programs that help youth transition provide sufficient monetary and adult support to youth trying to find housing and save money, but it is up to the youth to stay involved and do the work necessary for the transition. It follows that these youth that are most motivated are the ones that end up forming relationships with the workers, because they show that they will accept help from others and are good workers. In the area of employment, all the youth interviewed were highly motivated individuals that showed the adult workers that they had good work skills and the adult workers gave them opportunities to work within the agency.

The area that the youth need most improvement appeared to be in employment. It is a trend in our economy that a lot more people are unemployed than in the past, yet it seems youth in foster care are being hit very hard. Working part-time does not incur enough money to support oneself after transitioning out of the foster care system, so they end up using public assistance, for instance, food stamps and SSI. Many youth understand they need to work more to afford living expenses, they just cannot find employment in this economy. "I'm trying to look for a second job now, because I'm about to be out of the [program that pays for rent]." Youth work hard and do what is necessary to afford what they need, but this is obviously not enough, especially when one considers all that they need in this point of their lives. Youth need to be

able to pay for all of their living expenses while being paid bottom rung salaries, because they have not had the time to gain experience. One way to attain a better paying job, that will not require the use of public assistance, is to become more educated, an endeavor that costs a lot more than many youth exiting the system can afford.

In today's society, it is commonly expected for a student to continue their education after they complete high school. Considering this expectation, less are in school full-time than can be hoped for, though it is commendable that many are in school full-time. It is not a feasible expectation to complete a college degree while also working to support oneself. Those that are highly motivated may be able to accomplish it, but since in more recent years, state child welfare has cut down on educational scholarships for youth in foster care, it seems like an impossible dream to some. Youth need assistance to navigate the system as well as outside opportunities. Learning how to access scholarships and about various programs and types of education for particular career paths is also an area in which this population needs more support. Many youth understand the importance of receiving an education, but do not understand the process as well as they could.

Limitations

This study was limited because it is not representative of the entire population of foster youth transitioning out of the Rhode Island foster care system. The youth in the money-savings program may be more successful than the general population, because terms of the program make youth personally responsible for their own savings. Youth whom keep up with the program may be naturally more highly motivated than the average youth in foster care, meaning their chances of achieving success are higher.

The youth interviewed in this study were all female, meaning that male perspectives would not have been taken into account. And they were all youth that had formed close relationships with the adult workers in the agency that houses the transitional programs, over-representing the importance of the workers in transitional programs as adult supporters, because these are youth that have been able to develop relationships that allow the workers to help the youth in a variety of ways.

Implications for Findings, Policy, and Research

Social workers and other helping professionals need to create ways for youth to gain access to what they need. It appears that current transitional programs help youth that do not have family to turn to, but there are areas where more support is needed. Some youth see the workers at these programs as the closest thing to adult supporters and view them with a sense of permanency that they don't find elsewhere. Workers need to keep this in mind when they interact with youth and make this a part of their practice. When youth are vulnerable, they need to be able to trust the adults in their life, and workers need to take care of this trust. In order to give youth the support they need in order to be successful, a program must be created that better cares for the needs of youth in the area of employment.

Workers need to become more knowledgeable in how to help youth find employment that is stable. There are existing programs, such as unemployment agencies and trainings for different careers, that help people find jobs in the state. Research needs to be done to identify what will most help youth connect with adults contacts that may be able to help them prepare for and obtain jobs when they are young. If Rhode Island could tailor the existing programs to work with youth in foster care, by training existing programs or by creating a new program which catered toward youth, it would help decrease the amount of unemployment in this population In the way

that Life Skills classes are now necessary for all youth in foster care over a certain age, programs that train youth in skills that will help them become employed should be made into state policy. There need to be policies in place and active programs that will supplement these deficiencies in success that youth aging out of foster care are appearing with.

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Appendix A

Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey[1]

Welcome to the Opportunity Passport™ Participant Survey. The answers you provide will help us learn more about the experiences of young people in foster care across America.

Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of your answers. If you would like more info or want to find out about the results of the survey, please contact: tsmith@metisassoc.com

Personal Information

1. What is your date of birth?
   _____ /_____ /_____
   Month / Day /Year

2. Are you male or female?
   ☐ *Male* ☐ *Female*

3. What is your race or ethnic background? (Please check all that apply)
   ☐ *White*
   ☐ *Black/African-American*
   ☐ *Hispanic/Latino*
   ☐ *Asian*
   ☐ *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*
   ☐ *Native American/Alaskan Native*
   ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____

4. Are you currently in foster care (under the legal responsibility of the child welfare agency)?
   ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *Don't Know*

5. Altogether, how many foster homes or other placements have you ever had?
   ☐ *1-3* ☐ *11-20*
   ☐ *4-10* ☐ *More than 20*

[1] Modified, September 2010

6. Of these, how many have been in foster homes (not group homes, shelters or residential treatment centers)?
   - ☐ *0*
   - ☐ *1-3*
   - ☐ *4-10*
   - ☐ *11-20*
   - ☐ *More than 20*
7. Of these, how many have been in group care (for example, group homes, shelters or residential treatment centers)?
   - ☐ *0*
   - ☐ *1-3*
   - ☐ *4-10*
   - ☐ *11-20*
   - ☐ *More than 20*

8. What is your marital status?
   - ☐ *Single*
   - ☐ *Living with a partner*
   - ☐ *Married*
   - ☐ *Separated*
   - ☐ *Divorced*
   - ☐ *Widowed*

9. How many children do you have?
   - ☐ *None (skip to #10)*
   - ☐ *1*
   - ☐ *2*
   - ☐ *3*
   - ☐ *4 or more*

   9a. If you have children, do any of these children currently live with you?
   - ☐ *Yes*
   - ☐ *No*

10. Who has helped you the most with continuing participation in your Opportunity Passport™? (Please check one only)
    - ☐ *Foster parents*
    - ☐ *Biological parents*
    - ☐ *Adoptive parents*
    - ☐ *Other family member (for example, aunt, grandmother, brother, sister, etc.)*
    - ☐ *Another young person (for example, friend, roommate)*
    - ☐ *Caseworker (includes case coordinator, case manager, social worker, Independent Living staff, Life Skills worker, Chafee worker, Transition Specialist)*
    - ☐ *Teacher*
    - ☐ *Someone at my job*
    - ☐ *Someone on my Youth Board*
    - ☐ *Someone on my Community Partnership Board*
    - ☐ *Opportunity Passport™ staff*
    - ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____
    - ☐ *Nobody helped me (skip to #11)*

Helping you to continue participation in your Opportunity PassportTM may include things like encouraging you to save money and make deposits, giving you advice about purchasing assets, taking surveys, etc.

10a. How helpful has that assistance been to continuing your participation?

- ☐ *Very helpful*
- ☐ *Not very helpful*
- ☐ *Somewhat helpful*
- ☐ *Not helpful at all*

11. Are you a member of the local Youth Leadership Board?
    - ☐ *Yes*
    - ☐ *No*

Education

12. Are you currently enrolled in school?
    - ☐ *Yes*
    - ☐ *No (skip to #13)*

12a. What type of school are you currently enrolled in? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ *Junior high school or middle school*
- ☐ *High school*
- ☐ *Vocational school*
- ☐ *Community college*
- ☐ *College*
- ☐ *Graduate school*
- ☐ *GED class*
- ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____ _____

12b. Are you in school full-time or part-time?

- ☐ *Full-time*
- ☐ *Part-time*

13. What is the highest grade you have <u>completed</u> at this time? (Do not include the year you are presently in)
    - ☐ *Sixth grade or less*
    - ☐ *Seventh grade*
    - ☐ *Eighth grade*
    - ☐ *Ninth grade*
    - ☐ *Tenth grade*
    - ☐ *Eleventh grade*
    - ☐ *Twelfth grade*
    - ☐ *One or more years of college but no college degree*
    - ☐ *Associates or 2-year college degree*
    - ☐ *Bachelors or 4-year college degree*
    - ☐ *Some Graduate School*
    - ☐ *Graduate degree*

14. Have you received a high school diploma, a general equivalency diploma (GED), or any other high school equivalent diploma? (Please check one only)
    - ☐ *High school diploma*
    - ☐ *GED or other high school equivalent diploma*
    - ☐ *None of the above (skip to #15)*

14a. Have you participated in or attended any of the following? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ *Military*
- ☐ *Americorps*
- ☐ *Job Corps*
- ☐ *Peace Corps*
- ☐ *Vocational School (includes trade or technical school)*
- ☐ *None of the above*

Employment

15. Are you currently participating in any of the following: (Please check all that apply)
    - ☐ *Work experience activity (for example, "job shadowing" – spending time with an employee at a workplace to see what their job is like, interviewing an employer or employee for a project or report) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *Internship (working on a short-term basis for a company or organization in order to gain practical work experience, could be paid or unpaid) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *Apprenticeship (learning a trade or art through a combination of paid on-the-job training and classes, usually under agreement or contract) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *Pre-employment training (for example, developing a resume, training on work ethics, appropriate dress, or time management) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *On-the-job training (for example, learning how to operate a cash register or a phone system, etc.) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *Independent living classes (either paid or unpaid) (skip to #16)*
    - ☐ *I am not currently participating in any of these activities (go to 15a)*

    15a. If you are not currently participating in these activities, have you <u>ever</u> participated in any of the following: (Please check all that apply)
    - ☐ *Work experience activity (for example, "job shadowing" – spending time with an employee at a workplace to see what their job is like, interviewing an employer or employee for a project or report)*
    - ☐ *Internship (working on a short-term basis for a company or organization in order to gain practical work experience, could be paid or unpaid)*
    - ☐ *Apprenticeship (learning a trade or art through a combination of paid on-the-job training and classes, usually under agreement or contract)*
    - ☐ *Pre-employment training (for example, developing a resume, training on work ethics, appropriate dress, or time management)*
    - ☐ *On-the-job training (for example, learning how to operate a cash register or a phone system, etc.)*
    - ☐ *Independent living classes (either paid or unpaid)*
    - ☐ *I have not participated in any of these activities*

16. Do you currently have one (or more) paying job(s) (including participation on your local Youth Leadership Board)?

    ☐ *Yes (skip to #16b)* ☐ *No*

16a. If no, have you ever had a paying job?

☐ *Yes (skip to #17)* ☐ *No (skip to #17)*

16b. If yes, is participation on the Youth Leadership Board your only current job?

☐*Yes* ☐ *No*

16c. On average, how many hours do you work per week? (Please enter a number, for example 20 or 30.)

_____ Hours/Week

16d. Have you been working full-time (40 hours or more per week) without interruption (straight) for the past six months or longer?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

16e. How many months or years have you been working without interruption (straight) at your current job?

If less than 1 year, enter the number of months you have been working:

_____ Months
(Enter a whole number, for example 3, 4, 5, etc.)

If 1 year or more, enter the number of years you have been working:

_____ Years
(Enter a whole number, for example 1, 2, 3, etc.
Round your answer, for example less than 1 and a half years would become 1 year; and 1 and a half years would become 2 years)

16f. What is your hourly pay? (Please enter a number, for example, 7.50 or 8.00.)

$_____

17. Are you currently receiving Medicaid? *(You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care. If you are in care, skip to #18)*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *Don't Know*

Other names for Medicaid include HUSKY, Medi-Cal, TennCare, MaineCare, RItecare, and Title 19.

17b. Are you currently receiving any other form of public assistance (for example, Social Security, TANF, Disability, Unemployment, Food Stamps, WIC, EBT, or Section 8)? Please do not include supports that you are receiving because you were in foster care, such as transitional housing or room and board payments. *(You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care.)*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *Don't Know*

Personal and Community Engagement

18. When you need someone to give you good advice about a crisis, are there…
    - ☐ *Enough people you can count on* ☐ *No one you can count on*
    - ☐ *Too few people you can count on* ☐ *Don't know*

19. When you need someone to give you advice about your job or school, are there…
    - ☐ *Enough people you can count on* ☐ *No one you can count on*
    - ☐ *Too few people you can count on* ☐ *Don't know*

20. When you need someone to loan you money in an emergency, are there…
    - ☐ *Enough people you can count on* ☐ *No one you can count on*
    - ☐ *Too few people you can count on* ☐ *Don't know*

21. Do you have an adult in your family that you will always be able to turn to for support (for example, birth or adoptive parent, spouse, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian)?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #22)*

21a. If yes, which *one* adult family member do you turn to most often? (Please check one only)

- ☐ *Birth parent*
- ☐ *Adoptive parent*
- ☐ *Spouse*
- ☐ *Adult sibling*
- ☐ *Extended family member (for example, aunt, grandfather, cousin, etc.)*
- ☐ *Legal guardian*

21b. If you need it, what can you count on this person to do? If needed, I can count on him or her to… (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ *Celebrate special events with me, such as my birthday, holidays, etc.*
- ☐ *Talk with me about my problems*

Helping you get into school includes any support you don't need to pay for like

- ☐ *Help me feel good about myself*
- ☐ *Be trusted with my most private information*
- ☐ *Provide me with a place to live*
- ☐ *Help me find a job*
- ☐ *Help me if I am sick*
- ☐ *Celebrate my successes with me, such as school graduation, getting a new job, etc.*
- ☐ *Help me get into college, community college or vocational school*
- ☐ *Help me pay for some or all of my education*
- ☐ *Help me care for my children*

22. Do you have an adult other than a family member that you will <u>always</u> be able to turn to for support?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #22P)*

22a. If yes, which <u>one</u> adult would you turn to most often? (Please check one only)

- ☐ *Foster parent*
- ☐ *Caseworker (includes case coordinator, case manager, social worker, Independent Living staff, Life Skills worker, Chafee worker, Transition Specialist)*
- ☐ *Teacher*
- ☐ *Someone from my church or faith-based community*
- ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____

22b. If you need it, what can you count on this person to do? If needed, I can count on him or her to… (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ *Celebrate special events with me, such as my birthday, holidays, etc.*
- ☐ *Talk with me about my problems*
- ☐ *Help me feel good about myself*
- ☐ *Be trusted with my most private information*
- ☐ *Provide me with a place to live*
- ☐ *Help me find a job*
- ☐ *Help me if I am sick*
- ☐ *Celebrate my successes with me, such as school graduation, getting a new job, etc.*
- ☐ *Help me get into college, community college or vocational school*
- ☐ *Help me pay for some or all of my education*
- ☐ *Help me care for my children*

Helping you get into school includes any support you don't need to pay for like helping you find a college or school, helping you fill out applications, taking you to college visits

22P. Please think about adults in your life who support you in some way. If you need it, what can you count on these people to do? (Please check all that apply) *(You do <u>not</u> need to*

answer this question if you answered "yes" to #21 or #22. If you answered "yes" to one of these questions, skip to #23)

- ☐ *Celebrate special events with me, such as my birthday, holidays, etc.*
- ☐ *Talk with me about my problems*
- ☐ *Help me feel good about myself*
- ☐ *Be trusted with my most private information*
- ☐ *Provide me with a place to live*
- ☐ *Help me find a job*
- ☐ *Help me if I am sick*
- ☐ *Celebrate my successes with me, such as school graduation, getting a new job, etc.*
- ☐ *Help me get into college, community college or vocational school*
- ☐ *Help me pay for some or all of my education*
- ☐ *Help me care for my children*

Helping you get into school includes any support you don't need to pay for like helping you find a college or school, helping you fill out applications, taking you to college visits

Housing

23. Where are you currently living? (Please check one only)
    - ☐ ***Living Independently*** *(by myself, with a friend, roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, husband, wife, etc.)*
    - ☐ ***Living with Family*** *(Birth parents, other relative such as aunt, brother or sister, Adoptive parents, legal guardian)*
    - ☐ ***Living in a Foster Home***
    - ☐ ***Living in a Group Setting*** *(Group home, Residential Care, or Residential Treatment Facility)*
    - ☐ ***Living in a School Dormitory*** *(Indian Boarding School or college dormitory)*
    - ☐ ***Independent Living Program*** *or* ***Supervised Independent Living Program*** *or* ***Transitional Living Program***
    - ☐ ***Couch Surfing*** *or* ***Moving from House to House*** *(because you don't have a place to stay)*
    - ☐ ***Homeless*** *(includes living in a homeless shelter)*
    - ☐ ***Other*** *(please specify)* _____

24. How many different places have you lived in the past twelve months? (Please enter a number, for example 3.)

    _____

25. Have you ever couch surfed or moved from house to house because you didn't have a place to stay? *(You do <u>not</u> need to answer if you selected Couch Surfing in #23)*

    ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

26. Have you ever slept in a homeless shelter or in a place where people weren't meant to sleep (for example, a car, the street) because you didn't have a place to stay? *(You do <u>not</u> need to answer if you selected Homeless in #23)*
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

27. Do you pay for housing?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

> F.Y.I. If you are paying for <u>some</u> of your rent, you should say Yes.

28. Is your housing affordable?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

> F.Y.I. Affordable means you can pay for your housing and still have enough for other expenses such as food, transportation, and utilities.

29. Do you feel safe inside your home?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

30. Do you feel safe in the neighborhood where you live?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

31. Do you feel that your housing situation is stable (for example, can you stay as long as you would like to, do you have control over whether you stay or have to leave)?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

32. Do you have access to the transportation you need to get to school or work?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

33. Do you have a valid driver's license?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*
    - ☐ *I'm not old enough*

34. Do you own a motor vehicle (for example, car, van, truck, etc.)?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

35. Do you have an Independent Living Plan that a caseworker or social worker helped you to prepare? *(You only need to answer this question if you are currently in foster care)*
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #36)*

An Independent Living Plan is a written plan to prepare you for adulthood that might include goals for education, employment and housing.

35a. If yes, does it contain a housing plan that you believe will lead to safe, stable and affordable housing?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #36)*

35b. Did you participate in the development of this housing plan?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Physical and Mental Health

36. Do you have health insurance? *(You do not need to answer if you are currently in foster care. If you are in care, skip to #37.)*

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #37)* ☐ *Don't Know (skip to #37)*

36a. If yes, who pays for your health insurance? (Please check one only)

☐ *Covered by my parents' insurance*
☐ *Covered by my spouse's insurance*
☐ *Covered by insurance provided by my employer*
☐ *Covered by insurance provided by my school*
☐ *I buy private insurance myself*
☐ *I am covered by Medicaid (including HUSKY, Medi-Cal, TennCare, MaineCare, RItecare, and Title 19)*
☐ *Other (please specify)* _____
☐ *Don't Know*

36b. Does your health insurance have dental benefits, or do you have separate dental insurance?

☐ *Health insurance has dental benefits*
☐ *Separate dental insurance*
☐ *I do not have dental insurance*
☐ *Don't Know*

36c. Does your health insurance pay for you to get mental health services, like counseling and substance abuse treatment, if you needed it?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *Don't Know*

37. When did you last have a physical examination by a doctor or nurse?
    - ☐ *Less than a year ago*
    - ☐ *1 to 2 years ago*
    - ☐ *More than 2 years ago*
    - ☐ *Never*
    - ☐ *Don't Know*

38. When did you last have a dental examination by a dentist or hygienist?
    - ☐ *Less than a year ago*
    - ☐ *1 to 2 years ago*
    - ☐ *More than 2 years ago*
    - ☐ *Never*
    - ☐ *Don't Know*

39. Has there been any time over the past six months when you thought you should get medical care but you did not?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (skip to #40)*

    39a. What kept you from seeing a health professional when you really needed to (please check all that apply)?
    - ☐ *Didn't know who to go and see*
    - ☐ *Had no transportation*
    - ☐ *Had nobody to go with me*
    - ☐ *Parent or guardian would not go with me*
    - ☐ *Didn't want my parents or others to know*
    - ☐ *Difficult to make an appointment*
    - ☐ *Afraid of what the doctor would say or do*
    - ☐ *Thought the problem would go away*
    - ☐ *Didn't want to talk about the problem*
    - ☐ *Couldn't pay*
    - ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____
      _____
    - ☐ *Don't know*

40. Has there been any time over the past six months when you thought you should see a mental health professional for a problem such as depression, substance abuse or anxiety, but did not?
    - ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No (if No, skip to #41)*

40a. What kept you from seeing a mental health professional when you really needed to (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ *Didn't know who to go and see*
- ☐ *Had no transportation*
- ☐ *Had nobody to go with me*
- ☐ *Parent or guardian would not go with me*
- ☐ *Didn't want my parents or others to know*
- ☐ *Difficult to make an appointment*
- ☐ *Afraid of what the doctor would say or do*
- ☐ *Thought the problem would go away*
- ☐ *Didn't want to talk about the problem*
- ☐ *Couldn't pay*
- ☐ *Other (please specify)* _____

  _____
- ☐ *Don't know*

Other

41. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the survey! The answers you gave will help your community make decisions about creating opportunities for young people leaving foster care. Remember, follow-up surveys are in April and October - don't forget to take your next one!

Appendix B
Questions from OPPS survey used to study youth successes in
the areas of employment, housing, and education.

The answers to these questions will be evaluated against questions the youth answer about their status in the fields of **employment:**

16. Do you currently have one (or more) paying job(s)
Yes, no

16a. If no, have you ever had a paying job?
Yes, no

Housing:

23. Where are you currently living?
Living Independently, Living with family, Living in a foster home, Living in a foster home, Living in a group setting, Living in a school dormitory, Independent living program, Couch Surfing, Homeless, Other

25. Have you ever couch surfed or moved from house to house because you didn't have a place to stay?
Yes, No

26. Have you ever slept in a homeless shelter or in a place where people weren't meant to sleep?
Yes, No

and Education:

12. Are you currently enrolled in school?
Yes, No

12a. What type of school are you currently enrolled in?
Junior High or Middle school, High school, Vocational school, Community college, College, Graduate school, GED class, other

12b. Are you in school full-time or part-time?
Full-time, Part-time

Appendix C

Interview Questions

How many foster homes were you in? Where you in just foster homes or group homes?

How is your current housing? Since transitioning out of care, was it had to find housing? How were you able to find stable housing (if you currently have stable housing)? Did anyone help you with this process?

Do you have a job? How long have you had this job? Is it a job that you will be able to stay at for long? Is there room for advancement? Do you get benefits? Can you find another job, if anything happens here? How did you find this job?

Are you currently enrolled in school? Why or why not? What level of schooling? Is it hard to balance a job and going to school?

Is it possible to accomplish all three of these things: housing, job, and school?

Appendix D

Consent Form
Dear Potential Participant,

As a student at Providence College, a part of the Social Work program, I am inviting you to participate in a study that is exploring the effects of permanency on foster youth's successful transition out of care. Such knowledge can be used to increase understanding within the field of social work, as well as by helping professionals that work with this population. Data gathered during this study will be reported in a research paper to be shared at Providence College. Identifying information will be removed from the data gathered.

At the present time, youth 18 and older that have been a part of the foster care system and that have, or are currently, transitioned out of the foster care system are being recruited for this research.

There are no anticipated significant risks associated with involvement with this research. Participants are free to decline participation in this research.

Confidentiality of participants will be protected by storing all recorded interviews and notes in a locked briefcase. While transcribing interviews, identifying information will be deleted. After transcription, the taped interviews will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or to decline to participate will not influence your relationship with the interviewer.

YOUR SIGNITURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

_____ _____
PRINT NAME DATE

_____
SIGNATURE

Thank you for your participation,
Megan Foster mfoster4@friars.providence.edu